

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A memory associated with a programmable TV recorder storing computer readable instructions for programming a processor to monitor an input port capable of receiving a video signal from a video signal source, to determine whether the video signal is recordable, and to generate an
5 output when the processor determines that the video signal is not recordable.

2. The memory as recited in claim 1, wherein:

the video signal source comprises a settop box;

the programmable TV recorder further means which communicate with a settop box
10 provider; and

the output comprises an electronic message sent toto the settop box provider indicating that the settop box is not operational.

3. The memory as recited in claim 1, wherein:

15 the video source comprises an antenna; and

the output comprises an alarm signal indicating that the programmable TV recorder is not receiving the video signal at the input port.

4. The memory as recited in claim 1, wherein the output is a signal which cancels a
20 scheduled recording event.

5. A memory associated with a programmable TV recorder storing computer readable instructions for programming a processor to monitor a video signal from a video signal source for changes, to determine, based on said changes, whether the video signal is recordable and to generate
25 an output signal when the processor determines that the video signal is not recordable.

6. The memory as recited in claim 5, wherein:

the processor is programmed to determine that the video signal is recordable when the video signal analyzed by the processor is changing.

7. The memory as recited in claim 5, wherein:

5 the processor is programmed to determine that the video signal is recordable when a portion of the video signal in a video frame monitored by the processor changes with respect to the corresponding portion of the signal in another frame.

8. The memory as recited in claim 5, wherein:

10 the processor is programmed to send at least one command signal to the video source and to determine that the video signal is recordable when the video signal monitored by the processor varies dynamically in response to the command signal.

15 9. The memory as recited in claim 5, wherein processor is programmed to determine that the video signal is recordable when the video signal received by the programmable TV recorder changes in a manner which is consistent with expected changes in a television program signal.

20 10. The memory as recited in claim 5, wherein processor is programmed to determine that the video signal is recordable when the video signal received by the programmable TV recorder changes in a manner which is consistent with expected frame to frame changes in a television program video signal.

11. The memory as recited in claim 5, wherein:

the processor monitors an audio signal associated with the video signal; and

25 the processor is programmed to determine that the video signal is recordable when the audio signal analyzed by the programmable recorder is not noise.

12. A programmable recorder for recording video signals provided by a settop box, comprising:

monitoring circuitry, which monitors a signal indicative of the operational state of the settop box and generates a state signal;

5 means which determine whether the settop box is operational based on the state signal and generates a determination signal; and

control circuitry, which effects a programmed response in response to the determination signal.

10 13. The programmable recorder as recited in claim 12, wherein the programmed response comprises cancellation of a schedule recording event.

14. The programmable recorder as recited in claim 12, wherein:

the programmable recorder further comprises:

15 a communications circuit permitting communication between the programmable recorder and a settop box control facility; and

the programmed response comprises transmitting an electronic message to settop box control facility indicating that the settop box is not operational.

20 15. The programmable recorder as recited in claim 12, wherein:

the programmable recorder further comprises a sensor disposed proximate to the settop box;

the signal is indicative of the on-off state of the settop box; and

the state signal indicates the on-off state of the settop box.

25 16. The programmable recorder as recited in claim 12, wherein:

the signal indicative of the state of the settop box comprises the video signal output by the settop box; and

the monitoring circuitry monitors the video signal and generates the state signal when the video signal is present at an input terminal of the programmable recorder.

17. The programmable recorder as recited in claim 12, wherein:

5 the signal indicative of the state of the settop box comprises the video signal output by the settop box; and

the monitoring circuitry analyses the video signal and generates the state signal when at least a portion of the video signal is changing.

10 18. The programmable recorder as recited in claim 12, wherein:

the signal indicative of the state of the settop box comprises the video signal output by the settop box; and

the monitoring circuitry analyses the video signal and generates the state signal when the video signal is consistent with a television program signal.

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19. The programmable recorder as recited in claim 12, wherein:

the signal indicative of the state of the settop box comprises the video signal output by the settop box; and

20 the monitoring circuitry analyses the video signal and generates the state signal when a selected portion of the video signal varies from frame to frame.

20. The programmable recorder as recited in claim 12, wherein:

the signal indicative of the state of the settop box comprises the video signal output by the settop box; and

25 the monitoring circuitry analyses the video signal and generates the state signal when a selected portion of the video signal is changes from frame to frame and the video signal is consistent with a television program signal.

21. The programmable recorder as recited in claim 12, wherein:

the signal indicative of the state of the settop box comprises the audio signal output by the settop box; and

the monitoring circuitry analyses the audio signal and generates the state signal when the
5 audio signal is present and varying in an expected manner.

22. A programmable recorder for recording audio/video program signals provided by a settop box, comprising:

a communications circuit permitting transmission of a command sequence from the
10 programmable recorder to the settop box;

monitoring circuitry that monitors a signal indicative of the operational state of the settop box and generates a state signal;

means which determine whether the settop box is operational based on the state signal and generates a determination signal; and

15 control circuitry that effects a programmed response in response to the determination signal, wherein:

the means monitors the signal indicative of the output of the settop box responsive to the command sequence transmitted to the settop box from the programmable recorder.

20 23. The programmable recorder as recited in claim 22, wherein:

the signal indicative of the state of the settop box comprises a program signal output by the settop box; and

the monitoring circuitry analyses the video signal and generates the state signal when the program signal changes in response to the command sequence.

25 24. A programmable recorder for recording video signals, comprising:

means for monitoring the video signal;

means for determining whether the video signal is recordable; and

means for generating a programmed response when the video signal is not recordable.

25. The programmable recorder as recited in claim 24, wherein:
the programmed response comprises cancellation of a scheduled recording event.

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26. The programmable recorder as recited in claim 24, wherein:
the video signal is supplied by a settop box;
the programmable recorder further comprises:

means for effecting a communications link with a settop box provider; and

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the programmed response is an electronic message sent from the programmable recorder to
the settop box provider indicative of an error in the settop box.

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27. A signal automatically generated by a programmable recorder indicating that a video
signal received by the programmable recorder that is to be recorded during a scheduled recording
event will not support the scheduled recording event.